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Personality differences between students who accept or reject proffered counseling assistance were investigated by comparing personality traits of 116 male students at the University of Kentucky who accepted or rejected letters of invitation to group counseling. Factor analysis of Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI) scores to two groups of 60 and 56 probationary male students revealed a major personality trait differentiation along a conformity-nonconformity dimension with additional factors in the total male population being scholarly orientation, nonauthoritarianism, social discomfort, and masculine role. Of 60 students in 1964, 24 accepted and 34 rejected the group counseling invitation. Their OPI scores revealed that the accepters were significantly more nonconforming than the rejecters. Of 56 students in 1967, 22 accepted and 34 rejected the invitation. Their OPI scores revealed that the rejecters were significantly more nonconforming than the accepters. The contradictory results may be due to the differing approach and content of the inviting letter, which appealed to differing individuals. (WR)

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Accepters and Rejecters of Counseling

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Research on the personality differences between clients and non-clients has been effectively presented by Berdie and Stein (1966), Mendelsohn and Kirk (1962), and Minge and Bowman (1967). Berdie and Stein reported little personality difference on the Minnesota Counseling Inventory between those seeking counseling and those not seeking counseling, while Mendelsohn and Kirk, using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, found clients more intuitive. Minge and Bowman found clients higher on Abasement and lower on Dominance than non-clients on the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule.

As yet, there seems to be little attention paid to a possible distinction between students who accept or reject proffered counseling assistance and students who seek or do not seek counseling. This is a fine distinction, somewhat akin to the difference between listening and hearing, but one which seems to the present writers worth investigating.

This study is a comparison of the personality traits of male students who accepted and those who rejected letters of invitation to group counseling.

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Method

In 1964, 60 full-time male students on probation after the first semester whose predicted grade point average was 2.2 or better were sent the following letter:

I was told that you were interested in some group counseling. Oftentimes students who do not feel they are doing as well as they could academically, or who have difficulty concentrating etc., are helped to feel better as a result of counseling and therefore more like studying.

Present plans are to start such a group Thursday, 9 to 10 a.m., November 5, 1964, meeting regularly at that hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the rest of the semester and maybe into the second semester, depending on the amount of interest. We would like to have you join us November 5th.

This also will be part of a research project (the counseling, of course, would be no different either way). All this will involve, as far as you are concerned, will be a battery of psychological tests to take in the beginning and at the end of counseling to see if there has been any improvement. You

can also schedule individual interviews to

1 talk about the results of these tests if any
2 of you are interested. All of this would be
3 held in strict confidence, of course, as well
4 as the tape recordings of all group sessions.
5 We ask only that you agree to take the battery
6 (about two hours testing time) when you enter
7 and again when you leave the group.

8 I am looking forward to seeing you November
9 5th at 9 a.m. in the Counseling Office, Room
10 201 Administration Building.

11 The invitation was accepted by 26 students and rejected
12 by 34 students.

13 In 1967, 56 similarly chosen students were invited to
14 group counseling by the following letter:

15 From a look at your high school record and
16 your ACT scores, we would conclude that you
17 don't belong on academic probation!

18 We have found a number of similarly able
19 students in your same predicament. Since group
20 counseling has been proven to be helpful in
21 such situations, we invite you to join with
22 no more than seven other students and a pro-
23 fessional counselor in a weekly meeting during
24 the second semester. This will mean one hour
25 once a week, the day and time to be worked out.

1 If you are interested, please call 2197
2 immediately and give use your name, telephone
3 number, and available hours on Monday or Wed-
4 nesday afternoons, Friday or Saturday mornings,
5 or Tuesday evening.
6 We'll notify you just as soon as the groups
7 have been arranged. The earlier we can begin,
8 the more chance there is of a successful
9 second semester.
10 The accepters consisted of 22 students, while the invitation
11 was ignored by 34 males.
12 The University of Kentucky routinely administers as part
13 of the orientation test battery the Omnibus Personality
14 Inventory (OPI), Form C. Twelve scale scores of the total
15 1965 and 1966 freshman population were subjected, by sex, to
16 a principal components analysis. Four scales -- Developmental
17 Status, Social Maturity, Repression-Suppression, and Non-
18 authoritarianism -- were omitted from analysis because of
19 their item overlap with the other scales. The principal axis
20 weights were rotated to a varimax criterion and estimated
21 factor scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of
22 10 were developed by the procedure suggested by Lawley and
23 Maxwell (1963). These same factor weights were applied to the
24 scale scores of the students in the 1964 population in order
25 to develop comparable estimated factor scores for the

1 personality variables. The estimated factor scores became
2 the independent variables in two separate stepwise discriminant
3 analyses in which the dependent variables were accepters and
4 rejecters of proffered assistance. In a stepwise analysis,
5 the first variable is compared, then the second variable is
6 added to the first, the third to the first two, etc. The
7 definition of factors was determined by a multiple correlation
8 procedure in which OPI scale intercorrelations constituted the
9 independent variables and the factor weight the dependent
10 variable (Nunnally, 1967).

11 Results

12 Table 1 contains the factor structure for the total popula-
13 tion of males entering in 1965 and 1966. Five factors accounted
14 for 81 per cent of the total variance and were defined as
15 follows. Factor I was called Nonconformity because the positive
16 weights on the scales of Impulse Expression and Couch-Kenniston
17 produced an R of .91. The R of .92 for Factor II was obtained
18 from the Thinking Introversion and Theoretical Orientation
19 scales. This factor was called Scholarly Orientation. Factor
20 III took its character from the OPI scales of Autonomy and
21 Religious Liberalism. The multiple correlation of these two
22 tests with the factor was .94; this factor represents a
23 dimension of Nonauthoritarianism. The single OPI scale of
24 Social Introversion defined Factor IV; its correlation with the
25 factor was .86; it was called Social Discomfort. The high

positive loading on the OPI scale of Masculinity-Femininity defined Factor V; it was called Masculine Role and its correlation with the factor was .87. Because of the large number of cases in the factor analysis, the shrunken Rs do not differ from those reported here.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 2 presents the mean factor scores for the 1964 and 1967 accepters and rejecters.

Insert Table 2 about here

The discriminating power of the predictors was tested by chi square with $p(k - 1)$ degrees of freedom, where p is the number of variables and k is the number of groups. The 1964 analysis produced a chi-square value of 11.23, which with five degrees of freedom was significant at the .05 level. A chi-square value of 12.13 was obtained for the 1967 sample; this value is also significant at the .05 level with five degrees of freedom. In each analysis, no additional significant variance was added to the discriminant analysis after the first personality factor.

Discussion

Table 2, presenting absolutely contradictory but individually significant results, poses an interesting question. Both are male populations, similarly selected, but invited by letters

1 differing in content and by sex of writer. The 1967 letter
2 was written by the senior author and offered only help; in
3 contrast, the 1964 letter, written and signed by a male
4 colleague, used a ploy as the introductory sentence, evoked
5 the promise of participation in a research project, and
6 promised, in addition to counseling, increased self-knowledge
7 through test interpretation. Perhaps the greatest difference
8 between the letters was in the degree of involvement expected
9 of the participants. The minimal involvement presented in the
10 1967 letter attracted males who were conforming, more passive
11 and dependent while the greater expectation of participation
12 expressed by the 1964 letter evoked acceptance by nonconforming,
13 more active males. It is apparent that the major differentiation
14 in both these samples is a personality trait along a conformity-
15 nonconformity dimension.

16 It is an accepted practice to write letters inviting
17 under-achieving students to participate in group counseling
18 (Dickenson & Truax, 1966; Gilbreath, 1967). Generally,
19 experimental and control treatment groups are formed of those
20 who accept the invitation and different treatment methods are
21 evaluated. The assumption is made, however, by various
22 investigators that students who participate are homogeneous
23 in personality. The relationship between counseling outcome
24 and client personality has been established (Mendelsohn, 1966);
25 the relationship between client personality and stimulus to

1 seek counseling is less clear.
2 This study suggests that students who respond to a
3 letter of invitation to participate in group counseling differ
4 in their personality test scores as a function of the content
5 of the letter. Unfortunately, the discriminating variables are
6 unknown. That is, the difference in the emotional connotation
7 of the two invitations could be presumed to appeal to differ-
8 ing individuals; perhaps the sex or the administrative status
9 of the inviter either attracted or repelled the students; the
10 greatly enlarged draft calls after 1965 may have prompted
11 more dependent males to seek help. The 1964 ploy claiming
12 knowledge of the student's prior desire for counseling --
13 since it was completely untrue -- may have stimulated different
14 response modes. The validity of these assumptions can be
15 established only by additional research.

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Table 1		Male Principal Axis Factor Structure*					h ²	
		Factor I Noncon- formity	Factor II Scholarly Orientation	Factor III Nonauthor- itarianism	Factor IV Social Discomfort	Factor V Masculine Role		
1	Thinking Introversion	-.127	.879	.079	-.121	-.213	85	
2	Theoretical Orientation	-.155	.869	.157	-.055	.254	85	
3	Estheticism	.192	.611	.065	-.001	-.591	76	
4	Complexity	.364	.517	.444	.033	-.165	62	
5	Autonomy	-.135	.186	.865	-.013	-.104	81	
6	Impulse Expression	.831	.026	.357	-.073	-.106	84	
7	Schizoid Functioning	.729	-.001	-.081	.514	-.276	88	
8	Social Introversion	.010	-.124	.087	.925	.140	90	
9	Religious Liberalism	.223	.031	.782	.076	.092	68	
10	Masculinity-Femininity	-.141	-.124	-.012	.035	.935	90	
11	Lack of Anxiety	-.483	.062	.131	-.553	.438	75	
12	Couch-Kenniston	.880	-.047	-.003	.052	-.055	78	
13	Per Cent of Variance	29	22	13	09	08		
14	*N = 3196							

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Table 2
Mean Factor Scores
for 1964 and 1967 Males

Personality Factor	Accepters		Rejecters	
	1964 (n=26)	1967 (n=22)	1964 (n=34)	1967 (n=34)
Nonconformity	45.54*	52.98*	51.76	47.38
Scholarly Orientation	50.95	51.74	51.85	48.48
Nonauthoritarianism	47.63	49.93	52.71	50.06
Social Discomfort	50.91	50.48	47.91	49.58
Masculine Role	50.09	52.33	52.59	47.96

*p > .05

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Abstract

Two samples of probationary male students ($n_1 = 60$, $n_2 = 56$) were invited to group counseling. An analysis of their personality test scores revealed significant differences between accepters and rejecters, with rejecters more nonconforming in one sample and accepters more nonconforming in the other. Possible reasons for these findings are discussed.

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